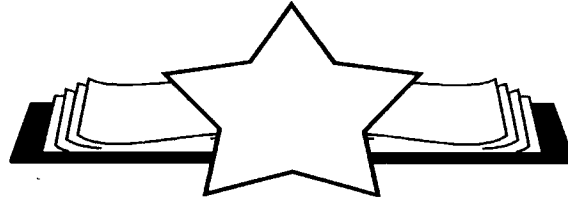


NEW JERSEY

2000-2001
Guidelines and Application

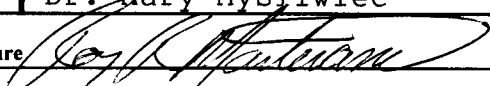
STAR

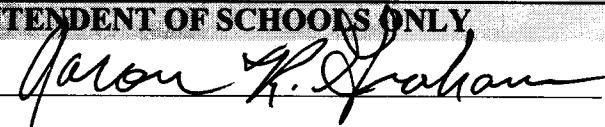


SCHOOLS

**Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000**

The Star School application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page

County	Bergen		
District (Proper Name)	Westwood Regional		
Address	701 Ridgewood Road		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	Twp. of Washington, NJ 07676		
	City		Zip Code
Telephone 201-664-0880	Fax 201-664-7642	Email www.westwood.k12.nj.us	
Chief School Administrator	Dr. Roy Montesano		
Nominated School (Proper Name)	Brookside Upper Elementary School		
Address	20 Lake Drive		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	Westwood, NJ 07675		
	City		Zip Code
Telephone 201-664-9000	Fax 201-722-0661	Email www.westwood.k12.nj.us	
Principal	Dr. Mary Mysliwicz		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature			

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY	
Approved: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	County Superintendent's Signature 

**NEW JERSEY
STAR SCHOOLS
2000-2001 APPLICATION**

RESPONSES to the information below and the statements must be ANONYMOUS. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school or the community. Use the words "the school" in referring to the applicant in the responses to the statements.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Grade Levels _____ 5 & 6 _____ _____ _____	School Enrollment _____ 364 Name of the School's Specialization or Whole-School Reform Model <u>Using Problem-Based Learning</u> <u>to Drive Workplace Readiness</u>
Location: _____ Urban/city; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban with urban characteristics; _____ Suburban; _____ Small City/Town; _____ Rural		
Previous Star School: Yes ___ No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, Year(s) _____		

KEYBOARDED RESPONSES to the statements below must be **no more than a total of five pages**. Keyboard the statement followed by the response.

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,** that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.

4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*? Provide student performance data for the school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 using state tests and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.

5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

6. **Previous Star School Winners Only:** Provide a one-page addendum to your application that describes efforts to expand or replicate the specialization or whole-school reform model within the school and/or the district. Have there been dissemination activities beyond the school or district? If so, please elaborate.

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.
6appss.20

Using Problem-Based Learning to Drive the *Cross-Content Workplace-Readiness Standards*

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*, that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.

This school was reconfigured to house all of the district's fifth and sixth grade students in the '98-'99 school year. The instructional design emphasizes technology infusion and problem-solving in a student-centered learning environment. Students take responsibility for their own learning, working individually and collaboratively on problem-based tasks that are the core of instructional delivery. In the process, they address all of the *Cross-Content Workplace-Readiness Standards*. These learner-active classrooms focus on providing a whole learning process that is interactive for students from the start of grappling with a problem to brainstorming solutions to managing time to utilizing resources. These skills will prepare them for the real world where everyone will have to think for a living and be capable of learning many new skills over the course of a lifetime. Enter a classroom . . .

The day begins! As students enter the classroom, they retrieve personal folders that contain their work in progress and completed work. They review the teachers' comments from the night before and the activity sheet that outlines the various problem-based tasks and related assignments. A quick check of the activity sheet tells the students when their teacher is planning to do any whole-class instruction. They fill that in on their individual time schedule for the day. Next is a check to see what small-group, skills-based, mini-lessons are being offered by the teacher. Students decide which they need to attend and sign up for them. They then plan as a group of three or four to meet for any collaborative aspects of their problem-based tasks and finally fill in the remaining spaces in their schedule with individual work.

While students are working, the teacher acts as a manager, mentor, and facilitator of instruction – meeting with individuals and groups to offer direct instruction, questions to probe student thinking, and advice for managing their work. Students move throughout the day to various functional areas of the room as needed: meeting collaboratively at a table, working individually at a desk, reading in couch-filled area, moving to a meeting area for whole-class instruction, working on one of the four classroom computers, attending a mini-lesson, retrieving resources from a materials area or their cubbies, and so forth. One teacher created two "office cubicles" for individual work in the classroom to mirror "hoteling" in the business world. Students who wish to use the offices Velcro their nametag to the outside partition for a certain length of time.

Each problem-based task presents students with a complex, real-world problem to solve that incorporates many of the Core Curriculum Content Standards indicators across the disciplines. Students learn to view the tasks as a combination of individual and collaborative tasks, where collaboration is reserved for the brainstorming, synthesis, and critique aspects and individual work focuses on achievement of content mastery. The problem-based task is presented at the beginning of a unit of study and therefore used to drive a felt-need for content mastery. Direct instruction is offered through whole-class lessons, small-group lessons, individual conferencing, printed how-to sheets, computer programs, peer tutoring, and in-class support personnel. Each problem-based task has a rubric that students use to assess their progress and set learning goals. Each problem-based task incorporates various computer uses such as data gathering, numeric analysis, presentation of information and solutions, and communication with others.

What you see is the result of complex planning that takes place outside the classroom as teachers create a scaffold for learning to ensure that all students have opportunities to reach their potential. This scaffold for learning provides a simulated real-world, work environment in which students set goals, make decisions, assess their own progress, utilize a variety of resources, and interact with peers and adults to achieve their learning objectives. As such, students are honing their workplace-readiness skills on a daily basis, unlike the situation in classrooms where teachers simply tell students what to do, how to do it, and when to do it.

Several factors promote high academic achievement and contribute to school-wide accomplishments. Problem-based tasks are assessed by analytical rubrics in which a "practitioner" column details grade-level performance and an "expert" column challenges students to go above and beyond expectation. Students and teachers continually refer to the rubric to drive instruction. The various instructional activities are designed to take advantage of what we know through brain-based research. Thus, the differentiated instruction provides a wealth of opportunities to learn that meet a diversity of learning styles and intelligences. The just-in-time learning approach offers students what they need, when and how they need it. Putting students at the center of their own learning increases time on task and results in covering more material in greater depth, which translates into higher academic achievement.

Beyond the classroom, the school motto is "Stay on T.R.A.C.K.", which reminds students to practice Tolerance, Respect, an A+ Attitude, Caring, and Kindness towards all. The social problem-solving based guidance program has established mediation as a means of working out solutions without violence or abuse. A new school code of conduct was developed with input from students, teachers, and parents and is recited each morning to heighten awareness of acceptable and appropriate behavior for all.

Students in this school are building the critical workplace-readiness skills they need to "navigate in the complex world of work" and "sustain [themselves] as adults in the labor force." They use the tools of technology throughout the learning process. They build critical and creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills in an environment that fosters self-management, safety, responsibility, and global citizenship.

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

The district has designed a new results-oriented teacher evaluation process that places an emphasis on teacher-initiated action research and continual professional development. Non-tenured teachers are required to develop a professional portfolio over their three years leading to tenure. In addition to district-wide in-service course offerings, teachers in this school are provided with summer training opportunities and follow-up classroom mentoring by outside consultants who specialize in the use of technology to drive instructional change. Most fifth grade teachers are now in their fourth year of working with these consultants, while sixth grade teachers have been included for the last two years, and are still in the beginning stages with the problem-based approach. The consultants are available to teachers through e-mail between their on-site visits and many teachers avail themselves of this support. The consultants also provide training and mentoring for the school principal to help teachers grow and develop their skills.

Teachers who are in their second year of teaching attend six days of training throughout the year focusing on instructional strategies. District memberships in the Metropolitan Schools Study Council and the Northern Valley Regional Consortium ensure ongoing opportunities for

professional development. Teachers in this school were also provided with copies of a

Each school day, teachers have one planning period that is shared by all teachers on their grade level and one that is shared by all teachers in their team. They regularly use this time to share ideas, tackle problems, and plan collaboratively. Teachers keep a log of their meetings to document issues that they discuss across the year. The school has a culture of professional development. It is not unusual for teachers to be found talking with one another about new instructional strategies, sharing resources, and inventing new models for classroom learning.

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.

The school principal is a participatory leader, providing all members of the educational community with opportunities to drive change in the school. Most school committees are chaired by teachers who are interested in the particular issues in question. Each grade level has a team leader who is responsible for planning team meetings and acting as a liaison to the administration and the other grade level. The principal has an open door policy and teachers regularly pop in to share ideas. A School-Planning Committee, comprised of both staff members and parents, meets monthly to provide opportunities for shaping future programs and practices by altering or improving the present areas of concern.

The principal spends significant time in the classrooms informally interacting with students and teachers in addition to conducting formal classroom observations. She carries a grid of the various classrooms to jot down the good things she sees happening in classrooms so that she can follow-up with positive feedback and share ideas with other teachers. She frequently acts as a substitute teacher, freeing teachers to observe a colleague in action, working with groups of students who need assistance with class work or research assignments, or filling in for a teacher who is out at a professional workshop to hone her teaching skills and strategies.

Classroom observations are based on nine identified principles of effective classrooms (learning from a felt need, high academic standards, focus on higher-order thinking, taking responsibility for learning, connected learning, working well collaboratively, individual learning path, high social capital, and technology infusion.) The principal, in effect, goes on a "scavenger hunt" to find evidence of these principles in the classroom – moving around the room, sitting and talking with students, and offering assistance as she gathers critical data for teacher assessment.

The principal regularly reviews the collaborative planning time logs and occasionally sits with teachers in planning meetings to participate in the discussions, highlight particular students, and present pertinent information about the school, district, and community. She also uses faculty meetings as staff development opportunities, and provides articles about current practices or research for faculty study group meetings.

Each month, the whole school attends a Spirit Day assembly which features one fifth grade class and one sixth grade class who plan a presentation to reinforce the school's values and expectations. The principal meets regularly with the sixth grade Spirit Committee to plan events for the school and community to build school spirit and a sense of belonging. She works with the combined fifth and sixth grade Student Council to plan events to raise funds for the school and local charities. This group also organizes school-wide activities to honor the many cultures of the school and celebrate together.

4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization of whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*? Provide student performance data for the school years 1998-99 and 1999-2000 using the state tests, and national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative

assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.

The district adopted the Terra Nova as the standardized test that is administered at the 5th and 6th grade levels because it is better aligned with the new, more problem-oriented, state tests. The school has shown gains in most areas since the school's opening three years ago, particularly at the fifth grade level where the learner-centered approach is more evident. Each year, the principal reviews the test results to identify areas that show the least improvement. Teacher-led committees are then formed to brainstorm ways to improve performance in those areas. The understanding is that each year, the grade-level performance should improve, based on teachers implementing better instructional strategies to help students achieve at higher levels. This year's scores show gains for fifth grade, where the teachers have had more training, but slight decreases for sixth grade. We have had only two years with this test, and more data will be collected as we move ahead. We hope for greater improvement as our teacher practices become ingrained. The district releases scores for general education students to the public on national tests, not the special education scores which are about 16% of the population.

MEDIAN NATIONAL PERCENTILE BY GRADE

	READING		LANGUAGE		MATHEMATICS		TOTAL	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
Grade 5	71.4	75.5	79.3	82.7	70.3	78.7	74.5	79
Grade 6	71.9	66.3	86.4	80.3	75.8	63.4	79.2	74.8

	READING	LANGUAGE	MATHEMATICS	TOTAL
Grade 5 March 1999	71.4	79.3	70.3	74.5
Grade 6 May 2000	66.3	80.3	63.4	74.8

	READING	LANGUAGE	MATHEMATICS	TOTAL
Grade 6 March 1999	71.9	86.4	75.8	79.2
Grade 7 March 2000	73.2	80.7	77.7	80.7

At the classroom level, students are assessed through rubrics, traditional tests and quizzes, performances, portfolios, reflective journals, and teacher-collected data. Teachers realize that in a learner-active classroom in which students are working on different tasks at any one time, collecting timely assessment information becomes a key component of building the scaffold for learning. Teachers use a variety of grids on clipboards to make notes as they move from group to group and individual to individual.

5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

Some nearby universities are recognizing that this school is designing cutting-edge learning environments and want to take advantage of the local expertise. One university has received a grant and asked teachers to partner with professors to better prepare them to train pre-service teachers. Another University is establishing this school as a Professional Development School for placing student teachers. Several teachers from the school have already spoken in courses at this University to describe this model of instruction. The school regularly receives visits from other schools that wish to see the students and teachers in action.

The Guidance program focuses on preparing students in sixth grade for the work place, building their awareness of resumes, first impressions, education needed, and choices available. Our school counselor served a summer internship in the NJ School-to-Careers program and was placed in a corporation. Her goal was to provide her students with current information about careers and the important skills needed, along with the understanding of the relationship between what they are learning now and their future career choices. Large company recruiters also visit her classes to share expectations with them to encourage better work and study habits. A Gifted and Talented program engages identified students in a semester-long economic and business simulation project with business partners and guest speakers as ongoing consultants. Mini courses highlighting the Stock Market and Technology play an important role in reinforcing career preparation, another step in the school's emphasis on workplace readiness.

Parents play a crucial role in this school through their support and their participation in its activities. The parent organization presents cultural enrichment programs, allots a small allowance for each teacher to begin a new year, and raises funds for special school needs. Parents regularly volunteer to support school projects, such as the garden they created and maintain. Each class is assigned a plot to grow flowers or vegetables of their choice. The harvested crops are shared with the school and neighborhood. Class mothers plan and organize holiday parties and events for students and build spirit by organizing family teams at Field Days and other celebrations. Parents also plan special social events that include all sixth graders.